

May 15, 1975

SENATOR DICKINSON: There's been some questions raised about the input into the bill. Did prisoners help draft the bill? How much input was there?

SENATOR ANDERSON: The bill itself was drafted by staff members of the Department of Corrections. Prisoners themselves did not do any of the drafting. There were representatives of the prison population that were involved in discussions on the bill to get their reaction to the bill. They did have input in that regard, but they did not do any of the drafting itself.

SENATOR DICKINSON: I hate to put Senator Syas on the spot. We've had a long hard day. I noticed that Senator Syas was a committee member who voted to not advance the bill. I think that he owes it to us to express his feelings, briefly, to give us his feelings and comments about his interpretation of the testimony at the hearing.

SENATOR SAVAGE: Do you wish to be placed on the spot, Senator Syas?

SENATOR SYAS: I didn't ask for it, that's for sure. I suppose that since I'm asked a question in all honesty ... I was attempting to stay out of the debate totally as I've indicated. Now that I have been asked a question, I don't know who the other member was that didn't sign the bill. I was one that did not sign the bill. Of course, let me answer the question by explaining it a little bit if you don't mind. I was not on the Judiciary Committee when they went through all of these studies last year. So you'll have to recognize that part. The studies were new to me because I wasn't in on them. Some of the other members of the Judiciary Committee had been there for years and engaged in the studies. OK. I did not vote for the bill to come out of committee mainly for the fact that I had an inclination to first agree with the one person that's on the Parole Board that had talked to me and given me material. Secondly, I have always been, as you well know in this Legislature, one of them that has not been rightly or wrongly too lenient on ... I've always figured that when you commit something that you should pay for it. Probably that's old fashioned. Basically, Senator Dickinson, since you've asked me the question, those are my reasons for not accepting the bill and not voting for it out of committee. The fact is that I'm not too inclined to go along with any leniency of people that have committed a crime, especially a felony, when it comes to sexual assault, murder, second degree, or whatever you might have, armed robbery and that sort of thing. Passing a bad check that's a little bit different category. I've always taken the position, as is well known around here, that I'm not one of the lenient persons and probably out of step with the permissive society on this. I just don't go along with it.

SENATOR DICKINSON: I'm sorry I let Senator Syas sit down. I'll just make a comment. If you agree you don't have to get up. If you disagree ... You do think then that this is liberalizing the penalty that the judge meated out to these prisoners in the first place?